

February 1917 When workers remade history

On the centenary of Russia's February Revolution, Socialist Worker looks at the events that turned the world on its head >> **Pages 10&11**

Socialist Worker

£1 | No 2544 | 8-14 March 2017 | socialistworker.co.uk

200,000 OUT TO DEFEND THE NHS

>> **PAGE 4&5**



SAY NO TO TRUMP AND MAY'S BIGOTRY MARCH AGAINST THE RACISTS



JOIN THE DEMONSTRATIONS 18 MARCH

★ London ★ Glasgow ★ Cardiff ★ For details see page 3 ★ standuptoracism.org.uk

EDUCATION

No to Tories' schools attack

by SADIE ROBINSON

THE TORIES are throwing another £320 million at expensive free schools in England —and could fund new grammar schools too.

They also plan to pass legislation so that the new schools can be selective.

The announcements, due in this week's budget, are a slap in the face for millions of children.

The Tories had opened 429 privately-run free schools by September last year. They want 883 to be up and running by September 2020.

The free schools programme is expected to have drained £9.7 billion from the education budget by March 2021.

Meanwhile chancellor Philip Hammond will give around 21,200 schools in England a paltry £216 million for repairs

Theresa May on the right

and refurbishment. The government itself estimates it would cost £6.7 billion to restore all school buildings to satisfactory or better condition.

And scheduled Tory cuts will snatch around £3 billion from schools in real terms every year up to 2020 (see page 18).

Free schools cost more than state-run schools. But the Tories back them because they want to run down comprehensive schools and increase privatisation in education.

Theresa May claims the plans will increase social mobility. In reality they will divert billions to help the children of the rich and entrench class division.

>> **for more on the budget see page 20**



THE THINGS THEY SAY

'PC brigade declare the end of mankind'

The Daily Mail gets a little over excited

'Not a month goes by without yet another Left-winger being appointed head of an Oxbridge college'

The Mail gets confused on how many Oxbridge colleges there are

'Is that how we save it then? With a march? I always thought it was better to win elections and then fund it properly'

Owen Smith MP—remember him?—attacks the NHS march

'I think I'd give myself an A'

Typical self-deprecation from President Donald Trump

'The soft coup is underway'

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell on Labour

'John obviously got on the late night typewriter'

Labour's Barry Gardiner offers his support



Labour MPs definitely won't challenge Corbyn—honest

A NUMBER of Labour MPs say they're definitely not going to challenge Jeremy Corbyn for the leadership. Not right now anyway.

Shadow business secretary Clive Lewis managed to simultaneously deny and encourage speculation that he wants to become leader.

Lewis said he was "annoyed" by rumours going around earlier this year that he was preparing to challenge Corbyn.

But his response when asked if he wanted to be leader in the future—"never say never".

Rebecca Long-Bailey is also not thinking about standing. "Fake news," she said.

Neither is warmonger Hilary Benn, who pointed out, "there isn't a vacancy because Jeremy is the leader".

Shadow chancellor John McDonnell doesn't fancy standing. "John McDonnell will not stand for the Labour leadership ever again," said John McDonnell.

McDonnell began last week by accusing the Labour right of plotting a



LOOK WHO'S back

"soft coup" against Corbyn.

He ended by "holding out hands" to the hard right Progress faction.

He invited Lord Peter Mandelson—who he attacked in the pages of Socialist

Worker last week—"to come and have a cup of tea".

Peace hasn't broken out.

But everyone is digging in for a long war of attrition.

A new faction, Open Labour, is set to be launched.

A cynic might call this the vehicle for the soft left has-beens who want rid of Corbyn.

But really it's the beginning of an exciting new project.

Not convinced? The top speaker is former leader Ed Miliband. Who says Labour has nothing new to offer?

Meanwhile left and right are about to spend the next seven months gearing up for another battle over rule changes at conference in September.

It's going to be a long and gruelling battle, and the left won't win unless it can push outwards and look to the struggle outside Labour.

Corbyn's speech to the huge NHS demonstration on Saturday (see pages 4&5) will have given him a boost.

Cups of tea with his enemies will not.

A TINY committee of MPs set up to consider doubling the publicly funded income of the Royal Family took thirteen minutes to decide. Yes came the answer.

The Sovereign Grant will rise from 15 percent to 25 percent of the Crown Estates income. Having agreed £360 million for Buckingham Palace, the Seventh Dedicated Legislation Committee will now be disbanded.



The committee meets briefly

TONY BLAIR has attended a secret meeting at the White House to discuss working for Donald Trump according to The Mail on Sunday.

The former prime minister held talks with Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser Jared Kushner with a view to becoming a Middle East peace envoy for Trump. Yikes.

Private vigilante police to protect the poshos

RETIRED COPS are to set up a private police force to deal with a "national crisis" in law enforcement.

They claim the agency, being set up by former Metropolitan police officers, will patrol central London, make arrests, gather evidence on crimes and mount private prosecutions.

The agency will have access to the national police database.

The scheme, called My Local Bobby (MLB), is headed by Tony Nash, the former borough commander of Newham, east London, who retired

last week.

Under the MLB scheme, trained former police officers wearing a uniform will patrol in Belgravia, Mayfair and Knightsbridge.

The private force will attempt to alert local police to crimes.

If the police and Crown Prosecution Service decide not to investigate the offences, MLB will mount private prosecutions.

MLB has signed a memorandum of understanding with the police to access sensitive criminal records of potential offenders if and when they are prosecuted privately.



Cop—Nash

Terror cop promotes racist right wingers

MARK ROWLEY is the Assistant Commissioner for Specialist Operations in the Metropolitan Police. The Met describes him as the "most senior counter terrorism officer".

On Monday he did a publicity thing to get people to report suspicious activity to the police.

Troublemaker wonders if the fact that the Met has arrested almost one person a day for terrorism is suspicious.

But what is suspicious behaviour is

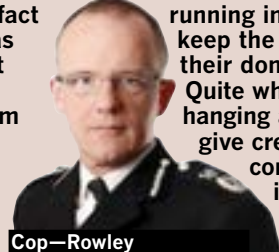
that on Tuesday Rowley was down to launch a 1,000 page report into Islamic terrorism.

The report and the meeting were organised by Islamophobic neoconservative think tank the Henry Jackson society.

At one point the shadowy right wingers shut down parliamentary committees they were

running in order to keep the names of their donors secret.

Quite why a top cop is hanging around to give credence to the conspiring right is another question.



Cop—Rowley

Paying copper's legal bills for Hillsborough

FIVE relatives of people who died in the Hillsborough disaster have been ordered to pay the legal costs of a former cop.

Former South Yorkshire Police chief constable David Crompton was asked to resign following fresh inquests into the deaths last year.

The inquests exonerated fans of any blame for the disaster which killed 96 Liverpool fans. They found that fans were unlawfully killed and said a series of police failings caused the disaster.

Crompton is challenging the decision to ask him to resign and five bereaved relatives applied to play a part in the hearing.

Lady Justice Sharp refused this request on Wednesday of last week and ordered the families to pay Crompton's bill for the hearing. This could cost up to £28,000.

Crompton's case is due to be heard at the High Court later this month.

FIGURE IT OUT

25,000

the number of people the press revealed have left Labour since last summer

200,000

the number of Labour members in 2015

528,180

its current membership

Harassment in colleges is under-reported

HIGH numbers of students and workers suffer sexual harassment, misconduct and violence from staff in universities, a Freedom of Information (FOI) request suggests.

The Guardian newspaper sent FOI requests to 120 universities.

It found that students made 169 allegations against staff between 2011/12 to 2016/17.

At least another 127 allegations were made by staff.

The official figures will be an underestimate, as many alleged victims said they did not come forward.

Some said they feared it would affect their education or careers.

Get in touch with **Socialist Worker**



Email reports@socialistworker.co.uk

Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

Facebook "Socialist Worker (Britain)"

Twitter @socialistworker



Newsdesk
020 7840 5656
Circulation
020 7840 5601



Write to
Socialist Worker
PO Box 71327
London
SE11 9BW

Tories suffer defeat over EU migrants' rights plan

by DAVE SEWELL

AS THE Tories come under increasing pressure to stop using European Union (EU) migrants as bargaining chips, activists across Britain are building for anti-racist demonstrations.

Tens of thousands are set to protest in London, Glasgow and Cardiff as part of an international day of action on Saturday 18 March.

This will come days after a crunch vote on migrants' rights, when the government's bill to trigger Article 50 returns to the House of Commons.

This is part of the process for leaving the EU.

Theresa May is refusing to guarantee the rights of some three million EU nationals in Britain until other EU members make the same guarantee for British nationals abroad.

Weyman Bennett from Stand Up To Racism said, "We should stand in solidarity with EU workers and demand that their status is protected."

"We must challenge the racist rhetoric coming from Theresa May's government, who are stealing Ukip's racist clothes on immigration."

Unpopular

May's position is deeply unpopular with both Leave and Remain voters—and the pressure to reverse it is being felt at the top.

A new report last week by MPs, including racist Tory Michael Gove, called it "unconscionable" to leave EU migrants under a "cloud of uncertainty".

The House of Lords voted to amend the Article 50 bill.

The government claims that making a "unilateral" guarantee will damage its chances of securing the rights of British nationals abroad.

This is a bogus excuse, as highlighted by 13 expats' organisations welcoming the Lords amendment.



PROTESTING FOR migrant rights and against Donald Trump in London last month

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

NATIONAL DEMOS SATURDAY 18 MARCH

● LONDON

12noon, Portland Place W1A 1AA

● GLASGOW

11am, Holland Street G2 4NB

● CARDIFF

11am, Grange Gardens CF11 7LJ

standuptoracism.org.uk

May is as determined as ever to impose a racist, nationalist version of Brexit and scapegoat migrants for the pain of austerity.

Guardian journalist Gary Younge said the amendment showed the strength of the anti-racist movement. He was speaking at a 150-strong Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) meeting in Hackney, east London, last Thursday.

Demand

But, Younge added, "While I am delighted the House of Lords have done what they did, we can't rely on them."

"They have done what they've done in no small part because we are what we are and we have done what we've done. If we stop, they will

stop—this comes from below."

Shadow home secretary and local Labour MP Diane Abbott called on activists in Labour to challenge anti-migrant myths instead of ignoring or pandering to them.

"We can't be afraid to take the debate to people, on the doorstep and in our workplaces," she said.

She added that building the demonstrations on 18 March had to be part of doing this.

"The march is so important because it's about all coming together and saying we won't let racism divide us," she said.



What's your story?

Email with your ideas
reports@socialistworker.co.uk

A day of Europe-wide action

SOCIALISTS ACROSS Europe have vowed to mobilise for the anti-racist protests.

A statement by the International Socialist Tendency said, "The bigger and more widespread they are, the stronger the basis for future action."

"We pledge to build these protests on the largest possible scale and appeal to socialists and anti-racists everywhere to join us in these efforts."

As well as the Socialist Workers Party in Britain, this includes revolutionary socialists building resistance to a

wave of racism and fascism across Europe.

In the Netherlands the march will come days after an election where the racist populist Geert Wilders could make a breakthrough.

In France it follows protests against horrifying police brutality and as the Nazi Marine Le Pen campaigns for the presidency. In Greece it comes amid the trial of the fascist Golden Dawn and the locking out of thousands of refugees in detention camps.

Read the full IST statement at bit.ly/2mXbYuO

Nazi Marine Le Pen

UKIP

Bigots at war after loss in by-election

UKIP IS in a "mess" according to party leader Paul Nuttall.

Open warfare has broken out in the racist party following Nuttall's failure to win the Stoke-on-Trent Central by-election last month.

In a BBC interview last weekend Nuttall pleaded, "Give me time to sort out this mess."

Just two days before he had claimed, "This is not a party in crisis."

"This is a party that is on the move and looking to the future."

Ukip is split between what former head of media Alexandra Phillips described as "the more pragmatic, soft

Paul Nuttall, who lost in Stoke

side and the more rabid and right wing side".

Former leader Nigel Farage wants the party to retain a hard right focus on attacking migrants. He has denounced Ukip's only MP, Tory defector Douglas Carswell, for failing to whip up enough hatred against migrants.

Arron Banks, Ukip's biggest donor, backs Farage and has declared he will stand against Carswell at the next election.

Ukip has been in near continual crisis following the vote to leave the European Union, but this isn't new. Its history is full of crises.

Figures last week revealed that the party is on the verge of bankruptcy. It received just £33,228 in donations in the last quarter of 2016.

Both the Green and the Co-operative parties received more than Ukip.

It's good that Ukip is in trouble. But for all Nuttall's problems, he still won nearly 25 percent of the vote in Stoke.

As long as mainstream politicians promote racism, Ukip will pose a threat.

Go all out for 18 March

Some 60 people attended a lively Stand Up To Racism (SUTR) rally in Harlow, Essex, last Thursday.

Tickets were sold for the coach to the demonstration in London on 18 March.

All those attending were encouraged to join a day of action in the town centre this Saturday to build for the demonstration.

The same evening

saw 80 people listen to speakers including former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg at a Manchester SUTR rally.

Joined

In Ealing, west London, some 50 people also joined a meeting with speakers including Labour MP Rupa Huq. And 35 people joined a

rally in Redbridge, east London. Rallies were also held last week in Nottingham, Tower Hamlets in east London and Haringey in north London.

This week was set to see rallies in Chesterfield, Walthamstow and Leytonstone in north east London, Hammersmith in west London and Elephant and Castle in south London.



ANALYSIS

ALEX CALLINICOS



Cheap credit helps keep Trump afloat

AS DONALD Trump careens from one crisis to another, one thing buttressing his presidency has been the surging stock market. Investors have been pushing up share prices since he was elected last November.

The initial public sales of shares in Snap, parent company of the messaging app Snapchat, last Thursday valued it at £27 billion. This is reminiscent of the dotcom boom of the late 1990s, when a craze for “new economy” IT sectors turned nerds into millionaires overnight.

Trump is keen to claim the credit for this. The euphoria is partly driven by the expectation that he will slash taxes and government regulation, and stimulate the economy by financing investment in the infrastructure.

Despite running against Wall Street, Trump has stuffed his administration with bankers—and bank shares have led the stock market surge.

But some market-watchers, such as John Authers of the Financial Times newspaper, are more sceptical. He argues that the markets had a big fright at the beginning of 2016, particularly because the Chinese economy seemed to be in trouble.

The whole world economy appeared close to a vicious deflationary spiral in which falling prices would push down output.

But these fears have been receding. The Federal Reserve, the US central bank, is more optimistic about the health of the US economy. It has started hinting loudly that it’s going to start raising interest rates from the very low levels they were cut to after the 2008 crash.

Nearly three quarters of economists questioned for one survey predict that the Fed will raise interest rates three times this year.

According to Authers, “supply managers’ surveys ... showed growth accelerating, with optimism for the future. US inflation, according to the Fed’s favoured metric, rose almost to the target of 2 percent. Europe continued to show signs of recovering from a very low base.

Resurgent

“The week also brought news of resurgent house prices in the US, and of inflation in Japan after two years of deflation. Crucially, China—the focus of concern a year ago due to its big overhang of debt—continued to rebound. Twelve months ago, Chinese producer prices were falling at about 6 percent a year, now they are rising at 7 percent.”

But are the markets any more rational in placing their hope in economic growth rather than in Donald Trump?

The dotcom boom of the late 1990s proved to be a financial bubble. Share prices soared out of line with the profitability of industrial and commercial firms.

The bubble burst in early 2000, in what was in many ways a dress-rehearsal for the 2008 crash.

But Michael Lebowitz of the investment consultants 720Global argues that US share prices and the “real” economy are even more out of line now than they were then.

National income rose by 4.08 percent a year in 1995-99 and 1.9 percent in 2012-16. Annual productivity growth was 1.84 percent 1995-99 and only 0.49 percent in 2012-16.

Then US government debt was £2.9 trillion, rising to £13.9 trillion by the mid-2010s. The earnings of the top 500 S&P companies rose over three years by 7.53 percent in the dotcom era, and actually fell 3.84 percent in 2012-16.

Nor is the US economy alone in resting on fragile foundations. Chinese growth recovered last year because the government encouraged banks to lend more to companies.

As a result Chinese banks now have more loans than anywhere else. Some £27 trillion compared to £25 trillion in the eurozone and £13 trillion in the US.

“The massive size of China’s banking system is less a cause for celebration than a sign of an economy overly dependent on bank-financed investment, beset by inefficient resource allocation, and subject to enormous credit risks,” said one economist.

But it’s not just China that depends on what the revolutionary Karl Marx called the credit system. Despite the Fed’s plans long-term interest rates remain either low, or negative in many countries once inflation is taken into account. Borrowing, in other words, is still very cheap.

It’s this easy money that is fuelling the market froth.

ICE IMMIGRATION officers carrying out Trump’s racist clampdown

‘US migrants are scared to go out’ as assault steps up

by ALISTAIR FARROW

DONALD TRUMP’S assault on migrants stepped up a gear last week with intensified round-ups and evidence of forced labour for people awaiting deportation.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers are recruiting police to join in rounding up migrants.

They have also begun to check people disembarking from internal flights.

Amy Grunder from the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy coalition (Mira) spoke to Socialist Worker.

“Trump’s executive order effectively targets all immigrants and refugees, especially undocumented immigrants,” she said.

Aggressive

“It relies on the aggressive conscription of state and local police to participate in civil immigration enforcement.”

In Massachusetts community and faith groups are getting behind a Safe Communities Act.

It will make it illegal for cops to operate “under 287g status, which gives sheriff’s deputies the same authority as ICE agents,” explained Laura Wagner.

Wagner, who is from the Unitarian Universalist Mass Action Network, spoke to

Socialist Worker about how they are “establishing sanctuary houses of worship”.

“They will provide physical sanctuary to those at risk of deportation and establish a rapid response network to respond to an increased ICE presence,” she said.

“Here in Massachusetts, ICE is now using mobile biometric equipment and using this to run their finger prints wherever the person is stopped.

“People in the immigrant community are scared here. People are scared to go out in

public at all. These reports are the same all over the country.”

Meanwhile, a collective class action lawsuit was filed last week. It alleges tens of thousands of migrants awaiting deportation were forced to work in prison.

Threatened

They were threatened with solitary confinement if they refused. The lawsuit focuses on the Denver Correction Facility in Colorado, run by the private GEO Group under a contract with ICE.

Shares in private security firms rocketed last week after Trump reversed Barack Obama’s move to scrap private prisons.

He also announced that he will propose a £43 trillion increase in military spending, which will also further militarise the police.

Trump’s approval ratings are already the lowest on record for this stage of a presidency. If they continue to plummet, it is increasingly likely he’ll look to desperate solutions in an attempt to boost them.

Actions were planned across the US on Wednesday by International Women’s Strike and by the organisers of the Women’s Marches in January.

For more information on the organisations go to miracoalition.org, surjboston.org and uomassaction.org

Activist Amy Grunder

Fight new Muslim ban

THE bigot-in-chief signed a new executive order denying citizens from six Muslim-majority countries entry to the US on Monday.

The ban is a replacement for the one introduced last month that sparked protests at airports across the US.

One difference is that it does not include Iraqi citizens. It comes into effect on 16 March.

The ban targets Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen over “heightened concerns about terrorism”.

It says nothing about the crimes of the US’s allies.

The previous ban had left out religious minorities from the seven targeted countries.

The new one is a blanket ban on all religious groups from the six targeted countries.

Challenges

This is an effort to avoid the legal challenges that had undermined the initial travel ban.

The new order needs to be fought with the same militancy as the first one.

Northern Ireland poll won't solve deep crisis

A polarised election squeezed the left, but what matters more is the movement, says **Simon Basketter**

THE UNIONISTS have lost their majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly for the first time. An election last week ended the overall unionist majority.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) now has fewer than 30 seats, depriving it of an effective veto in the assembly.

It entered the election ten seats ahead of Sinn Féin. But Sinn Féin won 27 seats, just one behind the DUP. The two main nationalist parties, Sinn Féin and the SDLP, now have more seats between them than the main unionist parties, the DUP and the Ulster Unionists.

In many ways the result is familiar. The DUP remains the biggest party. Sinn Féin remains the second largest.

Under the terms of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, power must be shared between the biggest parties from each side of the sectarian divide.

Tory Northern Ireland secretary James Brokenshire is supposed to call another election if there is not agreement to share power within three weeks.

The most likely scenario is a fudge because the minister has to call an election within "a reasonable period".

The Tories claim they have no intention of bringing back direct rule from London.

Millions

A scandal over green energy triggered the election. The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme paid business owners to use fuel and cost hundreds of millions of pounds.

An inquiry into the scandal is not expected to make any findings for at least six months.

Sinn Féin has said the DUP leader Arlene Foster cannot be reinstated as first minister while the inquiry is ongoing. The DUP say Sinn Féin cannot dictate who they nominate to lead the party.

An alternative to the sectarian headcount came from the People Before Profit Alliance (PBP).

BACK STORY

An energy scandal prompted an election in Northern Ireland

- The Unionists lost their majority in the Northern Ireland assembly for the first time
- But the Democratic Unionist Party remains the biggest party
- The People Before Profit Alliance put up a left challenge
- Gerry Carroll was re-elected but unfortunately Eamonn McCann lost his seat
- An election polarised on sectarian lines squeezed the left

Unfortunately PBP's Eamonn McCann lost his seat in the assembly despite increasing his first preference votes. He said, "It is a disappointing outcome. It was a vote that polarised, it was very much an orange and green election. It makes it very difficult for us."

He would have won if the number of seats had not been reduced.

However Gerry Carroll was re-elected to the Assembly for PBP. Gerry said, "I am over the moon to have been re-elected."

"This wasn't an easy election. It all began with RHI and the huge anger against Stormont. In the early days of the campaign the anger was palpable on the doors."

"However as the election went on it felt a lot less like the storming of the Winter Palace, and a lot more like Custer's last stand."

"The election very quickly polarised into a Sinn Féin versus DUP battle. In that context, holding a seat and winning six thousand votes is a substantial achievement."

"We still have two feet in the assembly, but what really matters is the thousands of feet on the street."

"We will need that people power in the turbulent days ahead."



On other pages...

Must the Labour Party move right?
>>Pages 14&15

South Korea



ANTI-PARK PROTESTERS on the streets of Seoul on Wednesday of last week

PICTURE: WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Confrontation on the streets—and there's potential for a general strike

by **WORKERS SOLIDARITY**, South Korean sister newspaper of Socialist Worker

TWO LARGE protests took place side by side in the centre of Seoul, South Korea's capital, on Wednesday of last week.

They were the result of political confrontation between the movement demanding the immediate resignation of president Park Geun-hye and her supporters.

The parliament voted to impeach the president last December and she is now waiting for the final ruling from the constitutional court.

This ruling is expected on Friday of this week or on Monday of next week.

Park has been calling for her supporters to take to the streets since January. Her right wing forces designated 1 March, a national holiday, as their day for mobilisation and prepared for it during the whole of February.

They had claimed that "several millions" would come to their protest.

It was nothing near that. But mobilising between 100,000 and 200,000 people was enough to

have a political impact on wider society.

The movement demanding Park's removal organised a counter-protest, but the call came only in the middle of last week.

Despite such short notice, many people responded and filled the square. But the counter-protest did not outnumber the right's protest.

Now the conservative press portrays the situation as if both sides of the public opinion regarding Park's impeachment have similar weight.

Nonsense

This is complete nonsense. If the movement against Park had put the same stress on mobilising for 1 March as right wing forces did, it could have far outnumbered them.

On Saturday 25 February one million people rallied to demand the immediate resignation and arrest of the president.

However, Wednesday's confrontation reveals the political weakness of the movement.

The radical left argued for weeks that the movement shouldn't let right wing forces mobilise without facing confrontation. But moderate forces within the movement did

everything to avoid calling a counter-protest until last week.

There was also naive optimism within the movement that the right wing could not mobilise seriously. This too was a mistake.

Speakers at the counter-protest said the movement will use all its strength, including a general strike by the KCTU union federation, should the constitutional court dismiss the impeachment.

This is significant.

Right wing forces say they will continue to mobilise, whatever the court rules.

Park's supporters are not limiting their fight to winning a court ruling or election. They are mobilising in an effort to shift the balance of forces in their favour.

The radical left is arguing that the movement should also build extra-parliamentary forces—including strikes.

Major protests are scheduled for every Saturday until the court ruling, and on the day of the ruling.

For more go to bit.ly/2INVpPl
A South Korean socialist will join by Skype a meeting in London on Russia 1917—Wed 8 March, 7pm, Student Central, Malet Street, WC1E 7HY



Rail strike is northbound as guards keep rolling

By RAYMIE KIERNAN

THE EXTENSION of driver only operation (DOO)—central to the strikes on Southern rail—is set to spread to Northern and Merseyrail next Monday.

RMT union members at the three rail firms were set to stage coordinated strikes to defend the role of the train guard and rail safety.

Northern and Merseyrail workers have launched new disputes. At Southern, Monday will be the 30th guards' strike in a year-long battle with owners Govia Thameslink Railway.

The guards have faced bullying, intimidation, lies and collusion between bosses and the Tory government in their fight for safety.

But their resistance has been a spanner in the works.

The strikes come as the transport giant behind Southern issued a profit warning to shareholders. Bosses again attempted to blame the woeful service on workers, who responded by calling new strikes.

Warned

Last week Govia's parent firm, Go Ahead Group, warned that it could be £15 million worse off.

This is because Govia's claim that daily delays and cancellations are due to "unofficial industrial action" has so far been unsuccessful.

Now it may not avoid financial penalties from the government.

Tory ministers are sympathetic—after all, they hired Govia to go to war with the unions. But the fact the DfT has kept its long overdue decision secret isn't a good sign for Brown's shareholders.

Passengers on Southern Railway last year suffered a train cancellation every nine minutes according to shocking new figures.

There were 58,983 cancellations on Southern in 2016. The firm runs 2,284 services on a normal weekday.

The three-day drivers' strike in 2016 represents 11.5 percent of total cancellations that year.

And during the guards' 25 strike days last year bosses claimed 60 percent of the normal timetable operated. That could account for 39 percent of 2016 cancellations, if strikes were to blame.

The real figure will be much

BACK STORY

Train guards at Southern rail have been fighting for months

● They are resisting attempts to replace guards with Driver Only Operated (DOO) trains

● The move is about boosting profits for fat cats—and threatens jobs as well as safety

● Southern has spearheaded the move to further extend DOO

● But resistance has spread too, with workers on Southern, Northern and Merseyrail set to strike together next week

lower. It's the bosses who are to blame for Southern's poor service.

From July to October Southern ran an "emergency timetable" when bosses cut 341, or 15 percent, of daily services themselves.

Their failure to employ enough staff to run trains lies at the heart of the daily disruption. But their dirty tricks on behalf of the Tories have also played a part too—cancelling trains when train crew were available being just one example.

In short, there has been an orchestrated campaign to crush workers' resistance on Southern and drive down workers' terms and conditions.

Strings

The Tories pulled the strings as other rail fat cats got ready to roll out the attack.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash said, "When Britain's private rail companies talk about modernisation we know that what they really mean is hacking back on jobs and passenger safety in the drive for fatter profits."

That's why every worker and trade unionist needs to support the strikes at Southern, Northern and Merseyrail.

Bosses have used the anti-union laws and sought to drive a wedge between the unions whenever possible. Workers' unity can overcome this as the fight to push back DOO spreads to other networks.



Visiting a picket?

Email reports and pictures to reports@socialistworker.co.uk

A SOUTHERN rail guard on a previous strike

British Airways workers rock Brighton

BRITISH AIRWAYS (BA) "mixed fleet" cabin crew began their latest walkout against poverty pay with a trip to Brighton on Friday of last week.

BA sponsors the Brighton attraction the i360 tower. Workers protested in front of it and on Brighton beach with flags, banners and a sound system to let people know how BA treats them.

The Unite union members were on a seven day strike. It was set to end on Thursday of this week.

The walkout will mean the workers will have had a total of 26 strike days so far.

They were set to picket Manchester airport on

Wednesday. The workers are all based at London Heathrow, but have organised a presence at other major BA hubs including Glasgow airport.

BA set up mixed fleet in 2010 as a way of hiring new workers on far lower pay than existing crew.

Despite soaring profits it has held their pay down to a starting rate of £12,000 basic pay.

This forces them to rely on allowances from flights to make ends meet.

A high staff turnover is part of the business model.

But if bosses thought it would stop workers organising and fighting back they have been proved wrong.



BA strikers on the promenade

SEND SOLIDARITY

● To send messages and donations in support of BA strikers go to bit.ly/2lgs00u

● To find out how to give support to TAs, go to **Unison—Derby City Branch or Durham Teaching Assistants Value Us campaign** on Facebook

Assist the teaching workers

THE LABOUR Party leader of Derby City Council was booed and jeered by angry parents of children with special educational needs last week. They were occupying the public gallery of the council chamber in protest at the impact of strikes by teaching assistants (TAs) in the city.

The TAs have held over 60 days of

industrial action in the last nine months.

The Labour council has imposed new contracts which slash TAs' pay by 25 percent.

The TAs' union Unison said it gave the council notice of "a further ten days of industrial action" starting from Monday.

Meanwhile, TAs in Durham are building for a national

solidarity demo on Saturday 25 March.

They aim to boost support for their campaign against a Labour council-imposed 23 percent pay cut.

Many feel that talks to resolve their dispute are going too slowly and are being used to diffuse anger at Labour before the council elections in May.

Fight the NHS cuts

THE CURRENT crisis in the NHS should come as no surprise with our current Conservative government.

When Labour proposed a national health service in 1946, the Conservative government voted against it 21 times. They've never liked the NHS and they never will.

Since 2010, the NHS has lost 15,000 beds and nursing students no longer receive bursaries—they will have to take out an ordinary loan to train.

This has inevitably reduced the number of people wanting to become nurses.

The bottom line is that you cannot trust the Conservatives with the NHS. In the words of Aneurin Bevan, they're "lower than vermin".

Matt Hockridge
Burton

THE CUTS to our National Health Service have become clearer now that all local plans have finally been published. The Coventry & Warwickshire Sustainability and Transformation Plan details £267 million of cuts in our area.

There will be fewer hospital admissions, closure of maternity and paediatric units, the probable closure of A&E departments, and cuts to stroke care units.

The report also admits there will be fewer nurses and doctors as it plans to cut agency staff without any commitment to employ additional permanent health workers.

The government plans to save up to £22 billion through cuts to the NHS.

We must oppose them.

Pete McLaren
Secretary, Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

Organising can beat moves against Palestinian events

AS PART of Israeli Apartheid Week I was asked to speak at events at universities in Liverpool and Preston.

Both events had been arranged for some months. But last week both Liverpool university and the University of Central Lancashire (Uclan) tried to stop the meetings.

At Uclan the meeting was banned as "unlawful". The university claimed that the meeting fell foul of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

I was told by organisers in Liverpool that the meeting could only go ahead if I agreed to a university "risk assessment".

It stated I had to write to the

university and confirm my acceptance of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

The IHRA adopted their working definition of antisemitism in 2015.

The definition is not really problematic but the "guide" to its interpretation is. It makes reference to 11 examples of things which are antisemitic.

Of these one is contentious. It states that it is antisemitic to deny "Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour."

This example is being used to try and shut down meetings about Palestine.

In Preston a local campaigning

group stepped in to host the meeting. Over 60 people came along to defend free speech.

In Liverpool I refused to sign the IHRA document. Instead I sent an email noting my life long commitment to anti-racism and opposition to antisemitism.

This seemed to throw the university into confusion and they let the meeting go ahead.

These examples show the universities are not overly confident in this attack.

They are vulnerable to claims they are shutting down free speech.

If we organise locally we can push them back.

Michael Lavalette
Liverpool

Why a mass movement is needed to fight back

COLLETE ASKED what building in the streets means (Socialist Worker 22 February).

The by-election results show that it isn't enough to just talk about the crisis in the NHS.

We have to mobilise locally and nationally to defend it and at the same time carry an argument about "health tourism".

Such campaigns, if large enough, would engage people pulled by some of

the racism prevalent today.

But in the process this offers a chance of showing who is to blame not just in words but in deeds.

Labour has 528,180 members but has not called a single demonstration.

It is struggle which offers the hope of a better world.

A fightback would also expose the divisions within the Tories and put them on the back foot.

Huw Williams
Bristol

Hockney—a sycophant to the rich

I COULDN'T disagree more with Alan Kenny's review of David Hockney's show (Socialist Worker, 22 February).

Yes, Hockney was a working class kid from Bradford whose dad was a communist.

But at the Royal College he groomed himself on the expectations of the super-rich art market. He



knows the establishment and he knows how to work it advantageously.

He has always remained aloof from campaigns.

His art is inoffensive, brightly coloured and

mind-numbing. It is opportunistic and populist.

It's a sellout show by an artist who sold out long ago.

Tom Davies
North London

Just a thought...

Toughen up—or go, Jeremy

LABOUR NEEDS to be a united party sharing common values and battles which should be won by landslides.

Angela Rayner should have a greater role. I'd kick Diane Abbott into the long grass.

Scottish Labour also needs overhauling and sorting out root and branch.

That's the only way we will win.

Dominic Allan
on Facebook

I'M A lifelong Labour and Socialist Workers Party supporter. I also support Jeremy Corbyn.

But if we want to defeat this wicked Tory government then Labour must be more "electable" to the general public.

Get the Tories out!

Paul Harris
on Facebook

THE CARDS are stacked against Corbyn—most of his MPs, the mainstream media oppose him. To get this far is amazing.

Pete Shaw
on Facebook

COME ON JC you have asked them nicely and they won't play. It is time to put on your hard face.

Susan Hammond
on Facebook

Bread, and Ritzes too

THE RITZ Ballroom in Brighouse, West Yorkshire, opened its doors 80 years ago.

The future of the ballroom is now in jeopardy.

The Ritz Hotel in London is threatening legal action unless the music venue withdraws the word "Ritz" from its title by 28 February.

The Ritz Ballroom in Brighouse cannot afford to fight this legal challenge.

This truly is a David and Goliath story.

John Appleyard
Liversedge

Bye to Nuttall lies, hello pies

PAUL NUTTALL has been forced to choke on the lies he told in his attempt to get elected. Good.

Now two people have turned his campaign office into a pie shop.

Also good. I'd much rather eat pies than swallow Ukip's lies.

Blythe Taylor
Stoke-on-Trent

A century ago this week in Russia, the February Revolution ended an ancient dictatorship and began the quest for a new society

THE February Revolution in 1917 saw working class people in Russia put themselves at the centre stage of history. They forced out Tsar Nicholas II—and ended over three centuries of Romanov family rule within days.

They had also begun a process that would put workers in control of society for the first time.

The revolution began on International Women's Day—23 February, or 8 March in the modern calendar (see box). Tens of thousands of women textile workers struck in the capital Petrograd.

Within a day nearly half the city's industrial workers had downed tools under the slogans of "Bread," "Down with the Tsar" and "Stop the war".

The Tsar was out of the country, but his wife the Tsarina reassuringly wrote to him. "This is a hooligan campaign ... all this will surely pass," she wrote.

It did not pass. Within two days workers had armed themselves. Soldiers, ordered to fire on the protests, joined the revolution. Whole regiments began to desert the army. The Tsar was forced to abdicate on 3 March.

The revolution was a result of decades of discontent and revolt within Russian society.

An earlier revolution in 1905 had seen workers set up the first workers' councils called "soviets" to organise the struggle. These reappeared during the February Revolution.

Creating

The Tsar managed to regain control, but the revolution left people with the experience of creating their own democratic organisations. Despite harsh repression, struggles continued in the years that followed.

Alexander Shlyapnikov was a metal worker, trade union leader and member of the revolutionary socialist Bolshevik party. He described Russia in April 1914 as "a seething cauldron of revolutionary energy".

As the horrific experience of the First World War sharpened this bitterness, Russia's rulers prepared for the uprising.

Shlyapnikov said the government "had decided to spray 1917 with hot lead" but this didn't deter people. On 11 February crowds of protesters marched through Petrograd shouting anti-war slogans and breaking shop windows.

By 14 February 98,000 workers were on strike from 58 different factories. The day before the revolution began, Putilov steel mill bosses locked out 20,000 workers who were demanding higher wages. Led by

WHEN WORKERS REMADE HISTORY



WORKERS AND soldiers fraternise in front of the Duma (parliament)



Bolshevik activists, they took to the streets.

After the women textile workers joined them on 25 February, Bolshevik workers broke into police stations and cut telephone lines to government offices. In response, police launched widespread arrests of revolutionary leaders the next day.

SOME SOLDIERS followed the Tsar's orders to fire on striking workers and killed 169, injuring over 1,000. But other soldiers in their regiment were furious and joined the protesters on the street.

By 27 February around 200,000 were on strike and some 66,000 soldiers in the Petrograd garrison had joined the revolution.

Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick wrote, "By the evening of 28 February, Petrograd's Military Commander had to report that the revolutionary crowd had taken over all railway stations, all artillery supplies and, as far as he knew, the whole city."

"Very few reliable troops remained at his disposal, and even his telephones were no longer working."

Peasants made up the largest group in Russia at the time, but workers drove the revolution forward. The working class had grown rapidly, with some estimates putting it at around 15 percent of the population.

The revolt was most powerful in the capital, where working class organisation was strongest, but it quickly spread across Russia.

The revolution flowed from a deep crisis that affected the whole

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The strike that lit the fire

THE WOMEN who toiled in the textile mills of Petrograd's Vyborg district were low-paid, unskilled and downtrodden.

After working 12-hour shifts, they were expected to do the cleaning, cooking and childcare.

But on 8 March 1917, International Women's Day, these women textile workers launched a militant strike against growing bread shortages. Mainstream historians dismiss their struggle that began the February Revolution as a "bread riot".

Despite their union trying to hold them back, 128,000 took the streets and marched to the bread lines.

Singing revolutionary songs, they ransacked bakeries and grocery stores and redistributed the goods.

The workers—and the revolutionary Bolshevik party—worked hard to spread the action.

They marched on other factories and threw snowballs at the windows calling on male workers to down tools and join them.

Red banners began to appear in different parts of the city echoing the women workers' demands.

Some 90,000 workers had already been on strike—and bosses had locked out steel workers at the



Women march against bread shortages

nearby Putilov plant the day before.

By the next day the strike had doubled in size, with around half of industrial workers in Petrograd walking out.

Their demand for bread also radicalised into calls against the monarchy and the First World War.

The third day brought 240,000 workers onto the streets, but the army was expected to mobilise against them.

Workers now had to win over

of Russian society. Bosses wanted to develop a modern, capitalist system. Workers were sick of poverty, war and lack of democracy and the peasants wanted land.

No one was prepared to defend the old order, but there were disagreements over what should replace it.

Capitalists feared that the revolt could go beyond what they aimed for. It wouldn't just get rid of the Tsar but also confront capitalism.

Limit

So those at the top tried to limit the revolution. The president of the parliament or "Duma", Michael Rodzianko, sent a telegram to the Tsar on 26 February suggesting he appoint a new government. There was no reply.

On 1 March General Alexeev warned of "imminent dangers" and advocated forming a new government responsible to the Duma.

But finance minister Peter Bark described how Rodzianko "feared he would no longer be able to contain the revolutionary movement".

AMID GROWING revolt, the Duma declared itself a Provisional Government on 2 March. It pledged an immediate amnesty for political offences and elections "on the basis of universal, direct, equal, and secret suffrage".

But it refused to bring Russia out of the war, warning that "strict military discipline" would be maintained for soldiers on duty.

Some hoped that this Provisional Government would have more authority over workers in revolt, but its authority was limited from the start.

The reformed Petrograd soviet was already in session when the formation of the Provisional Government was announced. On 1 March the Petrograd soviet issued Order No 1 that said government orders to the army should not be seen as valid without its approval.

The new government had no choice but to accept this "dual power" situation. As war minister Alexander



Workers set up new factory committees. Some took over management

A revolution in pictures



Crowds of people made a bonfire of the Tsar's symbols



Soldiers mutinied and workers took up arms to defend the uprising



Piling up papers to burn after looting the police archives



"Long live education for the people" say protesting children



A funeral for the martyrs of the revolution

This is part of a series of weekly articles on the Russian Revolution throughout its centenary year. Read our coverage at tinyurl.com/sw1917

Guchkov said, "The Provisional Government does not possess any real power. Its directives are carried out only to the extent that it is permitted by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies".

A Soviet of Workers' Deputies proclamation on 28 February read, "The old power must be completely crushed. In order to succeed, the people must create their own governmental organ."

It added, "We invite the entire population of the capital to organise local committees and take into their hands the management of local affairs."

And people did.

New workers' organisations sprung up in Russia's industrial centres. Soviets were created in cities and urban districts.

New trade unions were set up. Fitzpatrick wrote how workers set up factory committees "to deal with management". Some took over management functions to block closures.

Militias

Workers' militias replaced the police. Soldiers set up elected committees and challenged the officers' control of regiments. In the months after the revolution, the army fell apart.

The villages were quiet in February, as many peasants were away fighting in the war. But within months "the countryside was sliding into turmoil". Peasants burned down manor houses and seized land.

In February, largely spontaneous action got rid of the Tsar. But it took determined political organisation and leadership to take the struggle further, block attempts at counter-revolution and put workers in charge.

Most leading Bolsheviks were abroad or in exile at the time of the revolution. But the party played a key role. Thousands of workers and soldiers rushed to join it in the run-up to the revolution. By 1917 it was a mass party.

Fitzgerald explained why the Bolsheviks won support. "While other socialist and liberal groups jostled for position in the Provisional Government and Petrograd Soviet, the Bolsheviks refused to be co-opted," she wrote.

"While other formerly radical politicians called for restraint, the Bolsheviks stayed out on the streets with the irresponsible and belligerent revolutionary crowd."

In the months following the February Revolution, class and political divisions increasingly came to the fore. Liberals "moved towards an anxious conservative stance in defence of property and law and order".

But workers and soldiers became more radical—and eight months later, another revolution put them in charge.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties. We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to www.swp.org.uk or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } PUBLIC MEETINGS

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Russia 1917—workers' revolution and the festival of the oppressed

Sat 25 Mar, 7pm,
The Swarthmore Education Centre,
2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

MANCHESTER

Russia 1917—workers' revolution and the festival of the oppressed

Sat 25 Mar, 7pm,
Mechanics Institute,
103 Princess St, M1 6DD

{ SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

ABERDEEN

1905—The birth of our politics

Wed 15 Mar, 6pm,
Belmont Cinema Cafe,
49 Belmont St, AB10 1JS

BARNLEY

Deliveroo, Uber and the gig economy—has the working class disappeared?

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
YMCA, Blucher St,
S70 1AP

BIRMINGHAM: CITY CENTRE

What do we mean by class?

Wed 15 Mar, 7pm,
Birmingham LGBT Centre,
38/40 Holloway Circus,
B1 1EQ

BRADFORD

The fight for LGBT+ liberation

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Glyde House,
Little Horton Lane (opposite the ice rink), BD5 0BQ

BRIGHTON

Palestine—one or two state solution?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
Friends Meeting House,
Ship St, BN1 1AF

BRISTOL

Can Labour recover?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,
BS1 4QA

BURNLEY

100 years on—the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Red Triangle Cafe,
160 St James's St, BB11 1NR

SOCIALIST WORKER BRANCH MEETINGS

Abortion—why we defend a woman's right to choose

LONDON: CENTRAL

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Room 130, UCL,
Foster Court Building,
WC1E 6BT

MANCHESTER: CITY CENTRE

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount St,
M2 5NS

OXFORD

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Restore, Manzil Way (off Cowley Rd),
OX4 1YH

YORK

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Sea Horse Hotel, 4 Fawcett St,
YO10 4AH

CARDIFF

What is the united front?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
New York Diner, 157 City Rd,
CF24 3BQ

CHESTERFIELD

Why won't the Tories fund the NHS?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
Chesterfield Library, New Beetwell St,
S40 1QN

DUNDEE

How the Russian Revolution challenged oppression

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Dundee Voluntary Action, 10 Constitution Rd,
DD1 1LL

GLASGOW

Why we defend the free movement of labour

Wed 15 Mar, 7pm,
Avant Garde, 33-44 King St,
Merchant City, G1 5QT

HUDDERSFIELD

Does immigration reduce workers' wages?

Wed 15 Mar, 6.30pm,
Brian Jackson House, 2 New North Parade (near both train and bus stations),
HD1 5JP

HULL

A rebel's guide to Trotsky

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Cafe licious, 104 Cottingham Rd, HU6 7RZ

LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

What is class?

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
The Swarthmore Education Centre, 2-7 Woodhouse Square,
LS3 1AD

LEICESTER

Russia 1917—festival of the oppressed

Wed 29 Mar, 7pm,
Leicester LGBT Centre, 15 Wellington St, LE1 6HH

LONDON: BRENT AND HARROW

What does Trump's election mean for Palestine?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
The Pepperpot Centre, 1a Thorpe Close, Ladbrooke Grove (very close to the station), W10 5XL

LONDON: BRIXTON

Women in the Russian Revolution

Wed 15 Mar, 7pm,
Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Rd (near Effra Rd, facing Windrush Square),
SW2 1EP

LONDON: HACKNEY

What is fake news?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
The Round Chapel, 2 Powerscroft Rd (corner Lower Clapton Rd), E5 0PU

LONDON: HARINGEY

How to smash capitalism—a beginner's guide

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
St John Vianney Church Hall, 386 West Green Rd (corner Vincent Rd),
N15 3QH

LONDON: ISLINGTON

Fake news and alternative facts—media in the 21st century

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
The Old Fire Station, 84 Mayton St, N7 6QT

LONDON: LEWISHAM

Climate change—after Trump, how can we fight for our planet?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
West Greenwich Community and Arts Centre, 141 Greenwich High Rd (near Greenwich main line and DLR station), SE10 8JA

LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Is human nature a barrier to socialism?

Wed 15 Mar, 7pm,
Oxford House, Derbyshire St (opposite Bethnal Green Rd Tesco),
E2 6HG

LONDON: WALTHAM FOREST

NHS and social care under attack—how do we stop cuts and privatisation?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 1a Jewel Rd (off Hoe St),
E17 4QU

MANCHESTER: CHORLTON

Freedom of movement vs free trade—what kind of Brexit do we want?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Chorlton Library (side door), Manchester Rd,
M21 9PN

MANCHESTER: LONGSIGHT AND LEVENSHULME

Brexit—what do socialists say?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
Inspire, 747 Stockport Rd, M19 3AR

NEWCASTLE

Grunwick—women workers fight back

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Broadacre House, Market St,
NE1 6HQ

NORWICH

International Women's Day—how do we fight Trump?

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
Vauxhall Centre, Johnson Place,
NR2 2SA

NOTTINGHAM

Kashmir—no peace without a just solution

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
International Community Centre, 61b Mansfield Rd,
NG1 3FN

PLYMOUTH

Brexit—what do socialists say?

Wed 22 Mar, 7pm,
Quaker House, 74 Mutley Plain,
PL4 6LF

PORTSMOUTH

I, Daniel Blake and the Tories' war on disabled people

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Somerstown Community Centre, River's St,
PO5 4EZ

SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE

A rebel's guide to Gramsci

Thu 16 Mar, 7pm,
Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk St (near Crucible Theatre),
S1 2JB

SOUTHAMPTON

Fascism in the US? Who are the alt right?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Central Baptist Church Hall, Devonshire Rd,
SO15 2GY

SWANSEA

From the Wobblies to Standing Rock—a history of struggle in the US

Thu 16 Mar, 7.30pm,
Brynmill Community Centre, St Albans Rd,
SA2 0BP

WOLVERHAMPTON AND WALSALL

Reform or revolution—can change come through parliament?

Wed 15 Mar, 7.30pm,
Wild Bytes Cafe, Darlington St,
WV1 4HW

{ MOVEMENT EVENTS }

DORCHESTER

The Russian Revolution 100 years on—what does it mean for us?

Sat 11 Mar, 1.30pm,
Colliton Club, Colliton Park,
DT1 1XJ.

Hosted by Dorset Socialists

WAKEFIELD

Orgreave benefit gig

Sat 25 Mar, 7pm,
South Kirkby Miners Welfare Club, Stockingate, South Kirkby
WF9 3DP.

Hosted by the 300/21
Unite West Yorkshire
Retail Logistics Branch

CONTACT THE SWP

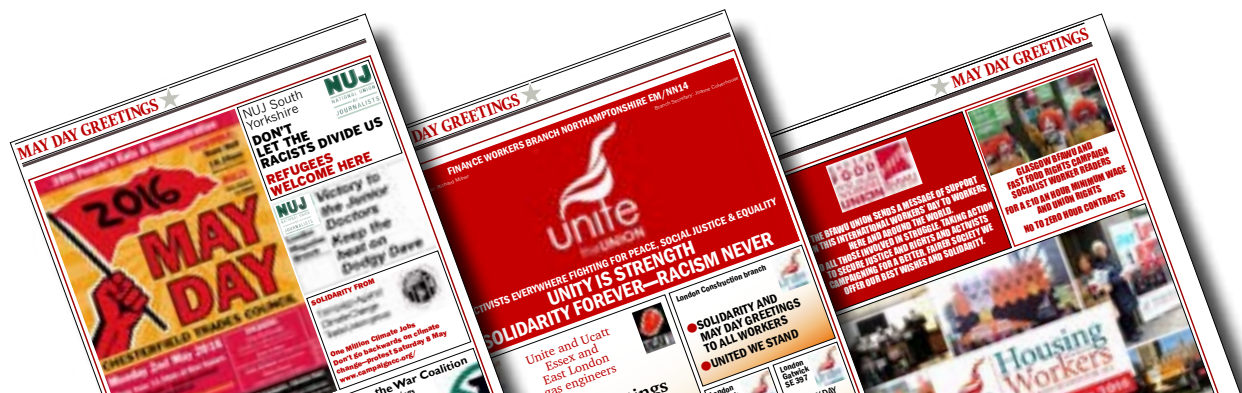
Phone 020 7840 5600

Email

enquires@swp.org.uk

Post PO Box 71327,
London SE11 9BW

MAY DAY GREETINGS



Every year, to mark International Workers' Day on 1 May, we print solidarity messages from readers, union branches and campaigns.

To get your May Day greetings in our 2017 supplement, please try and get your greeting to us by Wednesday 12 April

- £30 gets you one column
- £55 gets you two columns
- £95 gets you three columns
- ask us for larger greetings

contact: mayday@socialistworker.co.uk

Orwell was heading leftward along the Road to Wigan Pier

On the 80th anniversary of George Orwell's classic *The Road to Wigan Pier*, **Simon Basketter** looks at his account of working class life and the left

GEORGE ORWELL spent two months in Sheffield, Barnsley and Wigan in 1936 to visit "those barbarous regions". His trip produced *The Road to Wigan Pier*, published eighty years ago this month.

From his lodgings behind a tripe shop, he explored a landscape of "labyrinthine slums and dark back kitchens with sickly, ageing people creeping round and round them like black-beetles".

What emerges is a picture of the brutality of the poverty in the 1930s Depression.

Orwell reported on a "monstrous scenery of slag-heaps, chimneys, piled scrap-iron, foul canals, paths of cindery mud criss-crossed by the prints of clogs.

"This was March, but the weather had been horribly cold and everywhere there were mounds of blackened snow. As we moved slowly through the outskirts of the town we passed row after row of little grey slum houses."

Orwell's examination of the misery of unemployment wasn't just a matter of sympathy.

Running throughout is a condemnation of capitalism, but with a pessimism about the potential for workers to change the world.

He adopted the role of self-conscious outsider. That is one reason why the second section of *The Road to Wigan Pier* was more controversial.

Socialist

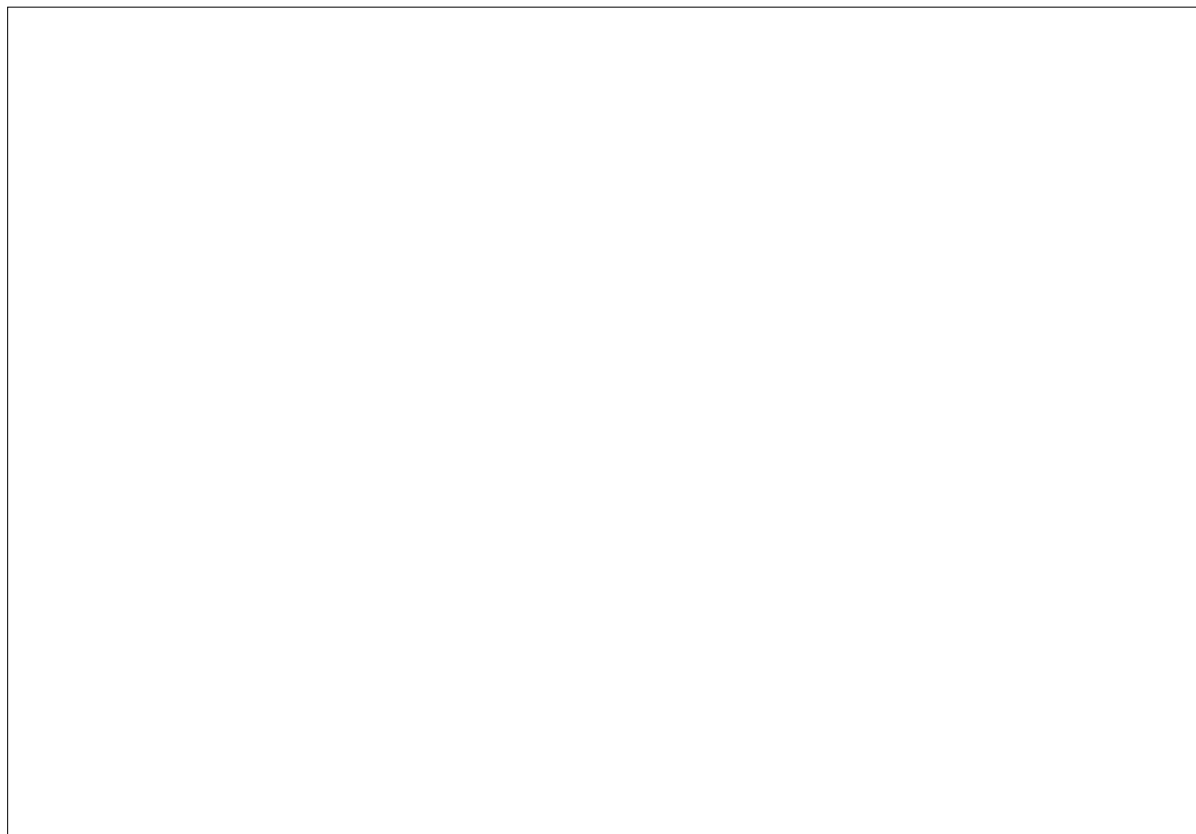
Orwell asked why everyone isn't a socialist, since socialism is so obviously true.

He laid the blame at the feet of the left. "One sometimes gets the impression that the mere words 'socialism' and 'communism' draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex maniac, Quaker, 'nature cure' quack, pacifist and feminist," he wrote.

Among his prejudices is a view that there are "honest" workers and "dishonest" middle class socialists.



His most piercing criticism was directed at his own class, but he also carried much of its baggage



WIGAN IN the 1930s was a "monstrous scenery of chimneys, piled scrap-iron and foul canals"

Orwell excluded the militant political workers from *The Road to Wigan Pier*, lest it undermine his then idea that socialism is a middle class affair.

Orwell's most piercing criticism was directed towards his own class—and he also carried much of its baggage.

The Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci believed that socialism must become common sense.

Orwell often imagined that "working class common sense" was socialism.

The left attacked Orwell's book, not for patronising workers but for showing them in a negative light.

The Communist Party attacked it because Orwell fought with what they called "Trotskyites" in the Spanish Civil War during 1936-37.

There are echoes in Orwell's work of some of the Labour right's attacks on the "metropolitan left" versus Northern workers today.

But there is an important difference. Orwell believed that workers should rise up—but when he wrote the book, he didn't believe they would.

His experience of the war against fascist General Franco in Spain made him believe they could.

The Road to Wigan Pier is a fascinating but flawed stopping point on the road to that conclusion.

A child of British Empire who turned to revolution

BORN ERIC Arthur Blair in Bengal in 1903, Orwell was the son of a high ranking civil servant in the opium department of the British administration of India.

Orwell noted, "To me in early boyhood, to nearly all children of families like mine 'common people' seemed almost subhuman.

"When I was 14 or 15 I was an odious little snob."

The repressive institutions of the British establishment radicalised Orwell.

Blair was sent to Eton, but rather than go on to Oxford he aided the British Empire by joining the Burmese police.

He turned his back on a life of privilege. Out of a commitment to journalism, and no shortage of guilt, he dived into the lives of the poor.

Orwell was an opponent of political oppression. He risked his life fighting fascism and narrowly escaped death at the hands of

Russian dictator Joseph Stalin's agents in Spain.

During the Spanish Civil War that began in 1936, the key event of Orwell's political life, he was both a socialist and a revolutionary.

This experience is recorded in his classic *Homage to Catalonia*.

Orwell was at heart a rebel against the establishment that produced him.

He wrote, "When I see an actual flesh-and-blood worker in conflict with his natural enemy, the policeman, I do not have to ask myself which side I am on."



THE THINGS ORWELL SAID

■ **WHEN ORWELL** wrote about the food of the poor he showed more insight than a restaurant full of celebrity chefs.

He wrote, "The ordinary human being would sooner starve than live on brown bread and raw carrots.

"And the peculiar evil is this, that the less money you have, the less inclined you feel to spend it on wholesome food.

"A millionaire may enjoy breakfasting off orange juice and Ryvita biscuits; an unemployed man doesn't.

"When you are unemployed, which is to say when you are underfed, harassed, bored, and miserable, you don't want to eat dull wholesome food.

"You want something a little bit 'tasty'."

■ **ORWELL DESCRIBED** a blind retiree cut back to half a pension.

"Here was a man who had been half-blinded in one of the most useful of all jobs and drawing a pension to which he had a perfect right," he wrote.

"Yet he could not demand this pension. He had to go to the colliery once a week at a time named by the company, and when he got there he was kept waiting about four hours in the cold."

■ **COAL MINERS** working underground suffered intolerable conditions.

Their lives were destroyed by an accident rate equivalent to a war.

Orwell wrote, "In every mining family they tell you tales of fathers, brothers or uncles killed at work. (And he fell 700 feet, and they wouldn't never have collected t'pieces only he was wearing a new suit of oilskins,' etc., etc.)."

From Wigan Pier to Nineteen Eighty-Four

A talk by socialist author John Newsinger

**10 March
7.30pm,**

**Sunshine House,
Wigan WN1 3SA**

Part of a three-day festival
orwellsociety.com

ON THE surface, recent by-elections and polls seem to back up the Labour right's mantra that the left can't win elections.

Even some Jeremy Corbyn supporters now say Labour is doomed to permanent opposition unless it ditches the “hard left”.

The reality is much more complicated.

Moving right would do Labour—and working class people it claims to represent—more harm than good. The left's present strategy is failing, but not through being too left wing.

Left wing ideas are presented as “out of touch”. Yet the last social attitudes survey found support for welfare rising and support for austerity plummeting.

While polls show many people support harsher immigration controls in an abstract sense, they oppose them in concrete cases.

Some 61 percent of people opposed the recent deportation of Irene Clennell, a YouGov poll found, and just 17 percent supported it.

A party's vote depends on many factors.

Labour was wiped out in Scotland in 2015 but not in England and Wales, despite having largely the same political direction.

Corbyn's troubles follow the pattern of the 1930s and 1980s.

The right has tended to dominate Labour. The left has generally only taken the leadership after disasters that shook the right's authority—and the party's reputation.

So Labour's most left wing leaders have had to grapple with the fallout from the worst right wing Labour governments.

The Labour right benefits from history it doesn't create.

For instance, Labour's landslide 1997 victory came despite Tony Blair, not because of him.

Tory attacks on workers had provoked hatred.

Some of the biggest swings to Labour were in constituencies that had seen big protest movements—such as against education cuts in Warwick and Leamington Spa.

Labour's pandering to big business, soft Tory voters and the right wing media weakened the party's core vote.

This neglect would come back to haunt Labour. The 1997 election saw turnout reach a record low—and then under Blair's governments it fell further.

The Labour vote also fell in large parts of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Sheffield and Nottingham, and stagnated across inner London.

Blair and his imitators today count on “triangulation”—moving to the right while claiming to represent everyone.

But divisions and conflicting interests in society can't be



THE ERA of New Labour and Tony Blair saw Labour lose five million votes from 1997 to 2010

Must the Labour Party move right?

As pundits argue that Labour can only win if it dumps Jeremy Corbyn's left wing policies, Dave Sewell looks at what is really behind the party's problems



Jeremy Corbyn

papered over indefinitely.

So why is Corbyn's Labour behind in the polls? One big issue is the constant sniping and undermining from the right. The image of disunity and civil war is harmful.

If people do think Labour under Corbyn isn't credible, they are only believing what most Labour MPs have spent the last two years telling them.

Another problem is that powerful forces are against those who seek to change the system.



Labour can't win the easier arguments while it dodges the harder ones

Most of the media have waged a vicious campaign to undermine Corbyn.

So has most of the Labour Party machine.

And when the left wins office the opposition from the ruling class will be vicious.

The European Union and the banks waged economic warfare in 2015 to stop Greek left party Syriza implementing even a fraction of its watered down programme.

The hint by an anonymous

general after Corbyn became leader that a military coup could stop him becoming prime minister is an even starker warning.

But pointing to these obstacles isn't enough. Any left challenge will come up against them.

The left needs a strategy to overcome them or it is admitting failure in advance.

YouGov pollster Laurence Janta-Lipinski commissioned a survey last October. He asked people who said they didn't trust Labour to choose from a list of reasons for why that was.

His sample by definition was disproportionately full of right wingers.

Yet the top option, chosen by 46 percent, was a “weak leader”.

That's hardly about being too left wing. Corbyn looks weakest when Labour acts against principles he has campaigned on, either because MPs defy him or because he compromises.

Like previous left wing leaders, Corbyn and his allies have met attacks with calls for “unity”.

Both of last month's by-elections saw Labour's vote share decline. Right wing candidates ran right wing campaigns—with the left's support.

ONCE you accept that Labour campaigns must “convincingly” support nuclear power or immigration controls, any figure with anti-nuclear or pro-immigration views seems a liability.

But that doesn't undermine right wing parties, it pushes people toward them.

If immigration is a problem, why not vote for parties promising to “get tough” on it?

If nuclear power is necessary for jobs, why not vote for Tories with no links to environmentalism?

Concessions weaken arguments that immigration isn't a problem and that jobs can be protected in a transition to sustainable energy.

One of the most galling polls concerns the NHS. It is reeling under Tory attack. All wings of Labour make it a campaign priority. Yet apparently May is more trusted with it than Corbyn.

Labour can't win the easier arguments while it dodges the harder ones.

If it was true that immigration caused the NHS crisis, May's racist clampdown on immigrants would be an effective response.

It's a lie, of course. But most of the Labour left has decided to say immigration puts pressure on services.

Many people correctly blame Tory cuts. But it doesn't follow that they trust Labour.

People don't just vote according to what they want, but what they think is possible.

One mainstream description of this is the “Overton window”.

It's a range of positions that seem acceptable, with those outside it appearing unrealistic and “radical”.

But this isn't static.

Corbyn's “hard left” policies seemed normal inside the Labour party when he first became an MP in 1983. Now they are regarded as very left wing.

The issue is how the left can shape people's views. It requires a bold vision of change to excite and motivate people, and organisation and politics that makes change seem possible.

The left makes a mistake when it endlessly compromises with the right.

By playing down its socialist principles it makes them seem embarrassingly “extreme”, sapping its own credibility.

The pain and uncertainty of austerity and capitalist crisis raise big questions that meek policies can't answer.

If people march together they feel part of something bigger, with shared interests and an ability to fight for them.

If workers strike they experience power where bosses usually lord it over them.

The relationship between such movements and votes isn't straightforward.

SOME huge struggles were provoked by Labour governments' attacks—from the 1978-9 “winter of discontent” to protests against the Iraq war.

These obviously didn't help Labour.

And people fighting for themselves can be unimpressed by cowardly politicians.

Why would striking miners in 1984-5 trust Neil Kinnock, the Labour leader who refused to back them?

The pattern is often for Labour-type parties to gain from movements in their decline.

But only such struggles can shift the political terrain decisively leftwards. And crucially, they represent a potential for workers to do themselves what no government can do for them.

Most Labour activists want to win a better world and see electing a Labour government as the way to do it.

But if that means conceding to the rotten policies of the right it defeats the object.

There is an alternative. Syriza capitulated to its enemies' blackmail.

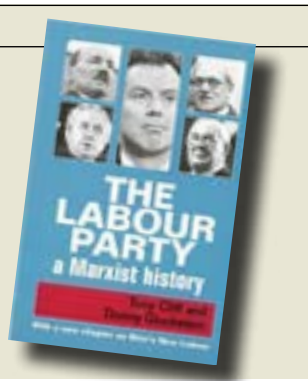
READ MORE

● **Jeremy Corbyn, Labour and the fight for socialism** by Charlie Kimber

● **The Labour Party—a Marxist History** by Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein

● **Socialist Worker articles on the Labour Party** go to bit.ly/2IH2QTy

Available at Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to bookmarksbookshop.co.uk



Socialist Worker WHAT WE THINK

The SWP, TUSC and Labour—how do we take on the Tories?

A left electoral challenge to Labour at the moment would be a barrier to building broader resistance to the Tories

THE SOCIALIST Workers Party has decided to suspend its membership of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

TUSC has provided a structure for trade unionists, campaigners and socialists to stand in elections against pro-austerity politicians.

It's not a decision we take lightly.

We have been part of TUSC for over seven years, stood dozens of candidates and recorded some of TUSC's better results.

We have worked with the other components of TUSC—the RMT union, the Socialist Party and independents.

We think it is right to cooperate with others on the left wherever possible.

Labour won't be the vehicle for socialist transformation any more than Syriza was in Greece—and we still want a socialist alternative to it.

But we cannot support the decision taken at TUSC's recent conference to stand in May's council elections in England and Wales.

These elections will be seen as a referendum on Corbyn. It won't matter if the candidates are right wingers. Every loss will be blamed on the left.

Barrier

For TUSC to stand at this point welds together Labour supporters and is a barrier to united front work with Labour people.

Our small electoral united front would make it harder to achieve a larger united front with the Labour left.

At the Copeland and Stoke by-elections Labour's candidates were from the right. However, Socialist Worker called for a vote for Labour. We don't want Ukip or the Tories winning.

And we know any victories for them would be used to unleash the dogs on Corbyn. We have been proven



THERE IS potential to build resistance on a bigger scale by working with Jeremy Corbyn supporters

PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

BACK STORY

TUSC is a left wing, anti-austerity electoral alliance

● The Socialist Workers Party has been part of TUSC for over seven years

● It has now decided to suspend its membership

● TUSC recently decided to stand candidates in England and Wales this May

● But any loss for Labour in the elections will aid attacks on its leader Jeremy Corbyn

● We need a broader fight to stop the Tories and racism

right. If TUSC was winning substantial votes the argument might be different, but the results will be modest. There's no shame in that. But it makes standing against a Corbyn-led Labour even harder to justify.

Our unwillingness to put forward candidates is not because Labour councils are doing a good job. They are ruthlessly imposing Tory cuts.

Many councils face a loss of 60 percent of their income between 2010 and 2020. Yet

there have been no Labour-led national marches, no councillors' revolt, no calls for defiance by councillors, unions and people who use the services.

Instead, at the last Labour conference, delegates and leadership united to declare it a disciplinary offence to pass “illegal” no cuts budgets.

Attacks

What's at issue is how to fight these cuts and work with Corbyn-supporting Labour members against those who ram through the attacks.

We believe the best way is to campaign in the streets and workplaces alongside Labour supporters.

None of us can predict future events. At some point, as part of the fight to move beyond social democracy, we believe it will be necessary to stand in elections again.

Were Corbyn to be removed and replaced by a right winger, the question of standing against Labour would return in sharper form.

We hope TUSC will continue to be part of the response.

In Scotland the situation is different. Labour is headed up by the anti-Corbyn Kezia Dugdale. The rise of the Scottish National Party has raised the question of alternatives to Labour.

We support Scottish TUSC candidates as part of what we hope will be a wider realignment on the left.

We wish the best to those who remain in TUSC and look forward to continuing to work with them.



Elections in May will be seen as a referendum on Corbyn

Demand second vote on independence

by CHARLIE KIMBER

THERESA MAY'S extraordinary speech to the Scottish Conservative conference last Friday did not just lay down the gauntlet to the Scottish National Party (SNP).

She set herself on a collision course with SNP first minister Nicola Sturgeon and everyone who wants an independent Scotland.

May said that powers that are repatriated after Brexit and would be expected to return to the Scottish parliament will instead be held by Westminster.

She added that the 1998 devolution settlement would no longer apply as it would be out of date after Brexit.

It's not only Scottish people who should take note of May's speech.

Demands

It could, and should, lead to mass demands for an independence referendum, and renewed protest.

May, who has a bare majority of MPs in the House of Commons, said the SNP



ONE OF many protests backing independence during the referendum

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

had not faced "democratic accountability". The SNP has 56 of Scotland's 59 MPs

In a bizarre section celebrating "the world's greatest family of nations" she lauded the Union's achievements.

These included "The Harry Potter books, which were

begun in a cafe in Edinburgh by an author from Gloucestershire".

But the most hypocritical part was where she cited the NHS as an example of the Union's success.

What's May's plan? Firstly, she wants to define the Tories

as the one and only party of the indivisible union.

May wants to say to everyone who doesn't like the SNP's plans that every other party will slither and twist but the Tories are full square for the United Kingdom.

Council elections across

Scotland are coming in less than two months and the Tories are leading Labour in the Scottish polls. May wants to push on with the Tories' very limited recovery.

Secondly, the SNP is on the spot. It has little choice but to demand indyref2—another referendum.

Up to now it has been loath to call a referendum, instead pushing on with administering Tory demands for austerity.

Power

Now there is no space to hide. Former SNP first minister Alex Salmond called May's speech a "power grab".

He added, "This is a prime minister who is attacking the very foundations of the Scottish Parliament."

Angus Robertson, the SNP's deputy leader, said "If the UK government cannot reach an agreement with the Scottish government to protect our interests in Scotland, there will be another referendum."

But that won't happen easily. Scottish Tory leader Ruth Davidson has indicated that Downing Street would insist on staging any referendum after Britain for-

mally left the EU in 2019.

Unfortunately the Labour party has learnt nothing from its electoral collapse after backing the Union in the 2014 referendum.

Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale complained that May "has undermined the Union at every turn".

There is no way back for Labour unless it breaks with its pro-Union stance.

It will take a mass movement, on the scale of the one in 2014 and beyond, to force the Tories to concede a referendum—and then win it.

It won't be won by saying it is to secure access to the bosses' EU single market.

It has to be based on militant opposition to austerity, war and racism.

It must be part of a fight for a society where people come before profit.

If that succeeds then just as David Cameron was brought down by the EU referendum, so May can be wrecked on the shores of Scotland.

More online

Make independence worth fighting for bit.ly/2msWlxu

**JOIN THE
SOCIALIST
WORKERS
PARTY**

- ☐ **Yes, I'd like to be a member**
☐ **Please send me some information**

Name
Address
.....
Postcode
Phone
Email

Return to SWP membership department, PO Box 71327,
London SE11 9BW. **Phone** 020 7840 5602
Email membership@swp.org.uk



Subscribe to Socialist Worker

Have Socialist Worker delivered with your post every week for a direct debit of £5 a month

I want to subscribe to **Socialist Worker** with a monthly direct debit of £5

Name

Address.....

Postcode

E-mail

Phone

I would like ____ extra papers to sell
(this will not be deducted from my bank account)

For official use only—this is not part of the instructions to your bank/building society

Sherborne Publications,
PO Box 71327 London SE11 9BW

Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by direct debit

Originator identification no. 9 7 3 3 5 5

Our reference no.

.....

1. Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To the manager:

Bank/building society

Address

Postcode

2. Name(s) of account holder(s)

.....

3. Branch sort code

4. Bank/building society account no.

5. Instruction to your bank or building society

Please pay Sherborne Publications direct debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the direct debit guarantee.

I understand that this instruction may remain with Sherborne Publications and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank or building society.

Signature(s)

Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account



Direct debit guarantee

■ This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.

■ If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Sherborne Publications will notify you ten working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Sherborne Publications to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.

■ If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by Sherborne Publications or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society.

■ If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Sherborne Publications asks you to.

■ You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

Socialist Worker Subscriptions

Post PO Box 71327, London SE11 9BW
Phone 020 7840 5601
Web www.socialistworker.co.uk

What do Tories' new rules mean for trade unionism?

As the Trade Union Act comes into force, **Sadie Robinson** looks at the barriers that aim to stop workers striking—and why the Tories want them

THE TORY Trade Union Act is now in force. It aims to discourage union leaders from balloting for strikes by adding more bureaucratic hoops and making it easier to deem ballots “illegal”.

Previously a strike vote was valid if a majority voted yes in a ballot. Now at least 50 percent of those eligible to vote must vote.

For some the thresholds are even tougher. If workers who usually provide “important public services” are balloted, at least 40 percent of those eligible to vote must vote yes.

So in a workplace with 100 union members, at least 50 would have to vote and at least 40 must vote yes.

The rule affects public sector workers in health, education, the fire service, transport, border security and nuclear decommissioning. But it doesn't apply to all of them.

For instance, not all nurses and doctors are affected by the 40 percent requirement. It doesn't cover all ambulance workers either.

Ambulance workers who are responding to calls made to an emergency number will be affected by the rule. In hospitals workers in A&E, high-dependency units and intensive care will be hit.

Illness

Workers in psychiatric, obstetric and maternity services are covered if their services are needed to prevent serious injury, serious illness or loss of life.

In the fire service the rule covers workers who do work necessary to extinguish fires and protect life and property. It covers bus services—but only in London.

In schools the 40 percent requirement affects staff working with



SOME 100,000 people protested against the Tories' attack in 2015

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

More on the web

- What do the Tories call 'important public services'? bit.ly/2m2UC00
- Is this the end for national strikes? bit.ly/2IIz0IF
- Strike figures show drop but don't tell the whole story bit.ly/2ICgdkJ
- 'You don't get me I'm part of the union' bit.ly/2miOPoP

WWW.SOCIALISTWORKER.CO.UK

people aged under 17, except in fee-paying schools.

The International Labour Organisation views “essential services” as those that are necessary to protect life, personal safety and health.

But employment law specialist Sarah Hooton said the government's focus was different.

It “appears to be much more on the significance of the economic impact that any strikes could have on members of the public”.

This gives the lie to the idea that public sector strikes have no impact.

The government itself admits this is not the case.

Its Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC) last year said the 50 percent threshold would bring the “main monetised benefit” of the Act.

The Tories estimate this will cut working days “lost” by 35 percent in important public services and by 29 percent in other sectors.

The RPC said, “The benefit to businesses and public sector employers is estimated at £12.6 million each year. The overall benefit of the proposals is £108.4 million over ten years in present value terms.”

Aim is to stop picketing

THE ACT aims to put strikers off picketing. Unions must appoint a picket supervisor. This person or their union must give the cops their name and contact details, and information about where picketing will take place.

The union must give the supervisor a letter approving the picketing. If a boss asks to see the letter, it must be shown “as soon as reasonably practicable”.

The supervisor must be present where picketing is taking place or be readily contactable and “able to attend at short notice”.

They must wear something that identifies them as the supervisor.

Previously a non-binding code of practice included “advice” on picketing. The Act has introduced statutory obligations.

The Tories are targeting picketing because they know it makes strikes more effective.

Workers must defy these anti-union laws and demand their unions resist them.

The government threatened to lift restrictions on bosses using agency staff as scabs during strikes. But this hasn't happened yet—the Tories can still be stopped.



New powers for enforcers

THE ACT brings in a range of rules designed to trip unions up, rule out ballots and make it harder to hold effective strikes.

Unions must give bosses two weeks' notice before taking action—double the previous amount.

They have to give more information on voting papers. This includes specifying the type of action that will be taken and indicating when action would take place.

Unions must provide the Certification Officer (CO) with details of industrial action taken in their annual returns.

They must also provide a

detailed breakdown of “political expenditure” where it exceeds £2,000 in any calendar year.

This includes naming political parties and organisations that received money and the total amounts paid.

Investigation

The CO can now launch an investigation over whether a union has complied with ballot rules even where no challenge is made.

It has new powers to impose fines on unions of up to £20,000.

And the government can “amend” this “by substituting a different amount” at some point in the future.

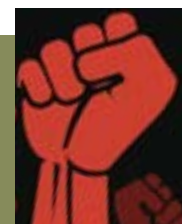


No political voice for your union unless you opt in

THE NEW laws undermine unions' political funds.

Previously unions had to make clear that workers could opt out of the political fund.

Now, it is “unlawful” to require members to contribute to the fund if they have not opted in.



More threats to workplace organisation

THE ACT says public sector bosses could be required to publish information on facility time.

Union reps have a right to represent their members and it costs bosses very little.

But the Act says that the government may restrict “rights of relevant union officials to facility time” if the “costs to public funds” are too high.



Paying through the nose for a kick in the teeth

THE costs of the Act “will fall primarily on trade unions” the Regulatory Policy Committee said.

The Tories estimate that total costs will hit unions for £5.3 million.

Reporting political expenditure will cost unions another £100,000 each year.

IN BRIEF

Solid support for action in Kirklees

SOCIAL WORK staff in Kirklees Council children's services held a one-hour walkout last Thursday.

The Unison union members, who struck to keep their ballot live, solidly supported the action. But it has to be the beginning of a programme of action and not the end for another 12 weeks.

That's why they demanded that Unison call longer action straight away.

The council's reaction to the stoppage convinced activists that it is terrified of action. Union officials must call more strikes.

Nick Ruff Kirklees Unison branch chair (pc)

Ballot over BMW's plot to rob pensions

AROUND 4,500 car workers are to be balloted for strikes to stop BMW robbing their pensions. The firm plans to close their final salary scheme on 31 May, despite record profits of £6 billion.

The Unite union members voted by 96 percent to strike in a consultative ballot. Unite should waste no time in turning it into action.

Nazis opposed in Clackmannanshire

ANTI-FASCISTS WERE set to protest against the Scottish Defence League in Alloa, Clackmannanshire this Saturday. The Nazis plan to demonstrate in Alloa to target a refugee family there.

The counter-protest will take place on High Street, Alloa between 12.30–3pm. ●Go to **Edinburgh Against the Racist SDL** on Facebook

Anti-fascist protest at French embassy

UNITE AGAINST Fascism has called a protest at the French embassy in South Kensington, London, on Monday 24 April from 6pm.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the fascist Front National, is standing in France's presidential elections. The first round is on 23 April.

Women's march held in London

THOUSANDS OF people joined a women's march through central London last Sunday. They called for action to help female refugees.

Singer Annie Lennox, human rights activist Bianca Jagger and London mayor Sadiq Khan made speeches.

Make noise for Orgreave justice

THE ORGREAVE Truth and Justice Campaign plans to protest outside the Home Office next Monday from 2pm.

It demands an inquiry into the 1984 Battle of Orgreave. Go to **Make Some Noise for Orgreave** on Facebook.

EDUCATION

LECTURERS AT Edinburgh College walked out last Thursday over the unfair sacking of a colleague after anonymous allegations were made against him.

Management breached investigation procedures by vetoing witnesses and ignoring the advice of its own investigating officer.

The strike by EIS Fela union members stopped most classes, with well-attended picket lines and a lobby of the Scottish parliament by over 130 people.

Many students showed



STRIKERS ON the picket line at Edinburgh College

PICTURE: EIS FELA EDINBURGH COLLEGE

SCHOOL FUNDING

'We need a campaign to defend education'

by **SADIE ROBINSON**

PARENTS, TEACHERS and other campaigners joined a public meeting over school funding cuts in Hammersmith, west London, on Tuesday of last week. The meeting was backed by the local council.

Changes to funding mean schools will lose £3 billion a year in real terms by 2020.

Around 150 people also met in Haringey, north London, to discuss fighting funding cuts.

Several meetings are planned for the next few

weeks. Some 120 people met in Hackney, east London, before half term. More meetings are planned over the next few weeks in the borough.

Dave Davies is branch secretary of the NUT union in Hackney. He told Socialist Worker, "We are in the early stages of this campaign but it's noticeable that no one disagrees with what we are saying."

"It's the easiest campaign I've ever been involved in."

He added that even Tories are turning against the cuts. Haringey and Fulham

councillor Sue Fennimore agreed. "It's telling that even those who originally supported funding changes say the government's plans are a mistake," she said.

Dave said the scale of the anger meant it was possible to build a broad-based campaign. "We need a major national campaign to defend education," he said.

"It needs to involve teachers, parents, governors, councillors and others. If we do that, we have the possibility of beating the cuts."

●Go to schoolcuts.org.uk

UCU ELECTIONS

Strong results show mood for a left turn

UCU LEFT candidate Jo McNeill won an impressive 41 percent vote in the union's general secretary election. Incumbent Sally Hunt won with 59 percent.

UCU Left ran against Hunt in 2012 and won 27 percent. Jo's vote shows a growing

mood for a left shift in the union.

Jo said it showed "that almost half of our active members in UCU want a change in leadership".

Turnout, at 13.7 percent, is "a major cause for concern". Jo stressed the need to

"build UCU from below".

Some 5,586 members voted for Jo and 8,138 for Hunt, who admitted the election was "hard fought".

Other UCU Left candidates also won high votes. Carlo Morelli won 46 percent of the vote for vice president.

OBITUARY

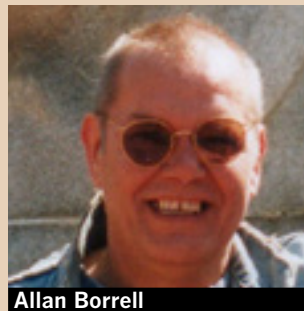
Allan Borrell 1947-2017

ALLAN BORRELL, who died last month, was a revolutionary socialist since his early twenties.

He joined the International Socialists, which was the forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), in Glasgow in 1972.

This was at the time of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' work-in and Allan soon became a prominent local member.

As Clydeside Socialist Worker organiser, Allan built an impressive network of regular workplace and public paper sales.



Allan Borrell

He became a talented, full time organiser for the SWP in Glasgow and then Teesside in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Allan then moved to London and became the manager of the SWP print shop, helping to produce

Socialist Worker every week for a number of years.

In the last few years Allan's health and mobility had deteriorated but he maintained his political interests, his positive outlook and his many friendships.

Alan's political enthusiasm, allied to his warmth and generosity, made him an inspiration to all of us who knew and worked alongside him.

We will miss him. Our thoughts are with his daughter Rachel, his son Frankie, and Harriet.

Dave Sherry

●Allan's funeral will take place on Friday 17 March at 2pm at Lambeth Crematorium, London SW17 0BY

PAY DISPUTE

College lecturers threaten more strikes in Scotland

LECTURING STAFF across Scotland's further education colleges voted resoundingly last week for industrial action. They want to force employers to honour the deal they struck almost a year ago over pay and conditions.

The EIS union's FE sector Fela executive requested an official ballot after members voted by nearly 97 percent to strike in an indicative ballot.

support by staying away.

Edinburgh College has seen mismanagement and crisis since its formation through merger in 2012.

Student recruitment has plummeted. Once Scotland's richest college, it now has its largest deficit.

Bosses are lashing out at individuals in a bid to distract from these failings.

The next strike was set for Wednesday, escalating to two days of walkouts in the weeks that follow.

●Send messages of support to pennygower1@gmail.com

CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

EHRC must escalate fight

WORKERS AT the Equality and Human Rights Commission are determined to keep fighting after seven of them were sacked by email while on strike last month.

The members of the PCS union struck for the sixth time last Wednesday after bosses forced through eight compulsory redundancies.

Some 25 strikers were on the picket line in Glasgow and 15 in London.

Glasgow PCS rep Bill Stevenson said, "This is a surge that looks like continuing and growing for some time yet."

PCS officials have said the union will fight to get the compulsory redundancies withdrawn—but they will need to escalate their action to win.

●More strikes set for 20 March, 18 April and 17 May. Donate to the strike fund at bit.ly/2msNH1X

ROUND-UP

Lift the pay cap, says PCS

THE PCS union is set to launch a national campaign over low pay with a day of protest on 31 March.

The union is demanding that Tory chancellor Philip Hammond lifts the 1 percent public sector pay cap. Public sector pay has fallen by as much as nine percent since 2010. The PCS says this could rise to 20 percent by 2020 if the cap is not lifted.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka is calling for united action among unions.

Meanwhile PCS branches are already fighting office closures in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)—which are certain to mean job losses.

DWP branches are campaigning to stop closures and have linked up with benefit campaign groups

and disabled activists. So far one branch has applied for a strike ballot.

It is good that the PCS is launching a fight over pay.

But the union also has to wage a real fight to save civil service jobs. At the very least there should be a DWP-wide strike ballot if compulsory redundancies are announced.

■WORKERS AT the National Gallery in central London were set to protest outside the gallery on Monday—the opening of a Michelangelo and Sebastiano exhibition.

They are demanding that all workers at the gallery are employed on equal terms and conditions and bosses stop renegeing on the deal that ended their 2015 dispute.

●Protest from 6pm, Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DN

UNITE UNION

Failing campaign in data buying scandal

by DAVE SEWELL

THE UNITE union leadership has accused Gerard Coyne of donating union funds in exchange for Labour Party membership data to help his leadership campaign.

West Midlands regional secretary Coyne is the right wing challenger in Unite's general secretary election.

Unite last week blocked a £10,000 donation from the region to Labour's West Midlands mayoral candidate Sion Simon.

Acting general secretary Gail Cartmail said Unite had received "overwhelming evidence that Mr Simon's campaign and Mr Coyne's campaign have entered into some form of a mutual support arrangement".

"It was unauthorised and that it should be halted," she said.

Spending

Coyne has accused Unite's incumbent Len McCluskey of spending too much time on internal Labour Party politics.

But Coyne should look at his own record. He was formally disciplined last year for speaking at an event hosted by Labour right wingers Tristram Hunt and MP Chuka Umunna.

GERARD COYNE is the right wing candidate for Unite general secretary

Despite Coyne's high profile and connections in the union bureaucracy, his campaign is floundering. He won 187 Unite branch nominations, compared to McCluskey's 1,185.

Left wing challenger Ian Allinson, a rank and file worker reliant on the backing of grassroots activists, got 76 branches to nominate him.

McCluskey talked about the Labour leadership last week, after being pressured for not standing clearly

behind Jeremy Corbyn.

Allinson called for an "unambiguous statement" to "end the confusion about how reliable his support for Corbyn is".

Defending

Even right wing deputy Labour leader Tom Watson said last week, "Where's Len McCluskey defending his leader in this difficult time?"

So McCluskey told Channel 4, "I always support the leader of our Labour Party,"

and that Corbyn "is a man of principle".

This leaves plenty of room for ditching Corbyn after the Unite election.

McCluskey supporters' claim that voting for Allinson would let Coyne win looks increasingly implausible.

McCluskey is under pressure from both left and right—and a left wing challenge is needed in the union more than ever.

●To support Ian Allinson's campaign go to ian4unite.org

CINEMA WORKERS

Duke of York joins pickets

FOLLOWING THE successful Picturehouse strikes last month another cinema in the chain has joined the dispute.

Workers at the Duke of York cinema in Brighton voted 100 percent to join the fight for a Living Wage and maternity and paternity pay.

That brings the total sites involved in the dispute up to five, just in time for the next round of strikes which are scheduled for 18 March.

The Duke of York is also the first site of the chain to join the dispute outside London.

This is a significant development which could see the campaign grow nationally.

And workers at other sites are talking

about the campaign.

Meanwhile, workers at the Hackney Picturehouse in east London were set to walk out from 2pm on International Women's Day, 8 March.

Workers currently get statutory maternity pay. This is either £139.58 or 90 percent of your average weekly earnings for 33 weeks—whichever is lower.

That's not enough to pay rent in London and many other cities in Britain.

Picturehouse workers are demanding real maternity pay equivalent to their wages as part of their fight for a Living Wage.

●For more information, go to **BECTU - Cinema Workers** and **A Living Wage for Ritzy Staff** on Facebook

CLEANERS

Sweep away LSE low pay

WORKERS AT the London School of Economics (LSE) have voted 100 percent to strike for equal pay and conditions on the 15 and 16 March.

They are United Voices of the World (UVW) union members. Bosses at contractor Noonan Ltd have so far refused their demands.

Workers are also fighting against homophobia. One cleaner was subjected to vile homophobic abuse and the university and Noonan have yet to investigate the incident.

"We want answers for why they didn't act on hate crimes," said union leader Petros Elia.

●To donate to the strike go to uvwunion.org.uk

ANTHONY GRAINGER

Public inquiry into shooting

THE TACTICAL adviser to the police operation that resulted in Anthony Grainger's fatal shooting said it was not his role to "check the accuracy of the intelligence".

Inspector Andrew Fitton was giving evidence at the public inquiry into Anthony's death.

He was questioned on the gas canister used in the operation, since there was no record of the risks involved.

Anthony was shot dead by a firearms officer after police moved to arrest three men in a stolen Audi in Culceth, Cheshire, on 3 March 2012.

It was part of "Operation Shire" into the group.

Eleanor Claxton-Mayer

●More on socialistworker.co.uk

TRANSPORT

Oxford drivers walk out

by PAT CARMODY

SOME 450 workers at Oxford Bus Company (OBC) struck on Monday and last Thursday.

Bosses refused to pay them the usual extra rate for two bank holidays costing some drivers up to £100 per day.

Management have torn up the recognition agreement with Unite, ended reps' facility time and evicted them from the union office.

OBC is part of Go Ahead group, the transport giant behind the dispute on Southern (see page 8).

Hundreds have joined the pickets—they know the stakes are high. One worker said, "They've brought in at



On the picket line

least 100 drivers from other contractors to break the strike."

Management sacked a striker for commenting on Facebook about the dispute and suspended another two.

Two more strike dates have been called for 17 and 24 March. The scale of the attack means that the strikes must be escalated.

●Send support messages to Marie.Hall@unitetheunion.org

TUBE

A strike at the end of the tunnel

LONDON TUBE maintenance workers in the RMT union began action short of strikes from Tuesday over a breakdown in industrial relations.

Drivers in the RMT and Aslef unions are voting on action due to bosses blocking applying for full time posts.

The ballots close next Tuesday and Thursday.

Workers at London Bridge station group are expected to vote to stand with colleagues.

One worker has been sacked and two others disciplined, but no ballot had been called as Socialist Worker went to press.

FOOD WORKERS



Taking on the bosses in West Bromwich

Every little protest helps

AROUND 180 workers held a lively protest at Tesco in West Bromwich, near Birmingham, on Monday.

They were protesting against their treatment by bosses at the 2 Sisters food supplier.

The company has suspended four Unite union shop stewards and sacked one after two of them brought up grievances. One allegation raised was that a rep was pushed out of the office when

trying to represent a member. Another was the company's use of hidden cameras and audio to spy on workers.

2 Sisters is Britain's biggest company supplying food to supermarkets, but workers say it treats them like "slaves".

They have already held one protest at 2 Sisters' office in Birmingham and plan to keep up the fight—possibly including industrial action.

Martin Lynch

HOUSING

SOME 15 councillors in Haringey rebelled against the Labour council's decision to demolish seven estates in the north London borough last Thursday.

The council has set up a part-private Haringey Development Vehicle to develop the land.

Housing association tenants on some estates have now been told they will have no right to return after demolition.

Some 60 people protested outside the council meeting against the HDV and demolitions. Paul Burnham from Haringey Defend Council Housing said, "We need to make it toxic for Labour councils to associate themselves with Tory policy."

■IN SOUTHWARK in south London housing activists are set to protest on 25 March against plans to push the market further into housing.

●12 noon, Sat 25 March, Canada Water Library, SE16 7AR

STOP HAMMOND MAKING US PAY

by CHARLIE KIMBER

TORY CHANCELLOR Philip Hammond's budget will look after the rich and turn the screw on workers and the poor.

Socialist Worker went to press before his speech.

But it was guaranteed that Hammond wouldn't address the continued assault on working class people's living standards and the services they need.

He will make matters worse.

Major benefit cuts are tearing lives apart but, for the rich and big business, major reductions will be implemented in inheritance tax and corporation tax.

And while there is a raging crisis over ordinary schools' funding, there was a £320 million handout for divisive new "free" schools and grammar schools.

Last week the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reported that Britain is suffering the weakest growth in living standards in at least 60 years.

It said low income families fare the worst.



PHILIP HAMMOND, chancellor of the exchequer

Low wages, together with tax and benefit changes, will lead to even deeper inequality by 2021-22. Incomes for the average family will not grow at all over the next two years.

The IFS calculated that

average household incomes will be 18 percent lower in 2021-22 than could have been reasonably expected in 2007-8, before the financial crisis.

It means a childless couple would be about £5,900 a year

FIGURE IT OUT

£5,900

A childless couple has lost this much annual income due to the economic crisis

£8,300

annual cost of the crisis to a couple with two children

SOURCE: IFS

worse off than they might otherwise have been. The figure rises to £8,300 for a couple with two young children.

People on benefits will be savaged if, as expected, inflation rises.

Most working age benefit rates

were frozen for four years from April 2016. They will be eroded in real terms for three more years.

The Resolution Foundation says that a couple with one person working, and two children, were going to be £495 worse off each year as a result of the benefit freeze. But they will now lose £680 as a result of higher inflation.

Food bank worker Marianne Williamson from east London told Socialist Worker, "I see people come in here every day who have jobs but can't make ends meet."

"The idea that these sort of people are going to lose £12 a week on top of where they are now is just disgusting."

"There's such a big divide in Britain today between rich and poor."

Hammond will tinker and promise more money for services, but it won't begin to fill the need.

The NHS needs an extra £12 billion immediately just to stave off the worst of the crisis. And councils face an overall £5.8 billion funding gap by 2020—on top of all the previous cuts.

Protest last Saturday (see pages 4-5)

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

Fresh cuts pile on pain

A NEW raft of attacks on welfare are due to come into effect soon. They will mean suffering for tens of thousands of people. They include:

- A £30 a week cut for new Employment and Support Allowance claimants in the work-related activity group will slash around a third of the current weekly benefit.

- Widowed Parents' Allowance will be replaced by a new Bereavement Support Payment for new claims.

Charity Childhood Bereavement Network said the new guidelines could leave parents as much as £12,000 worse off.

The government will

also stop new claims from parents who lived with but weren't married to their partner. Over 2,000 families with children could lose out each year.

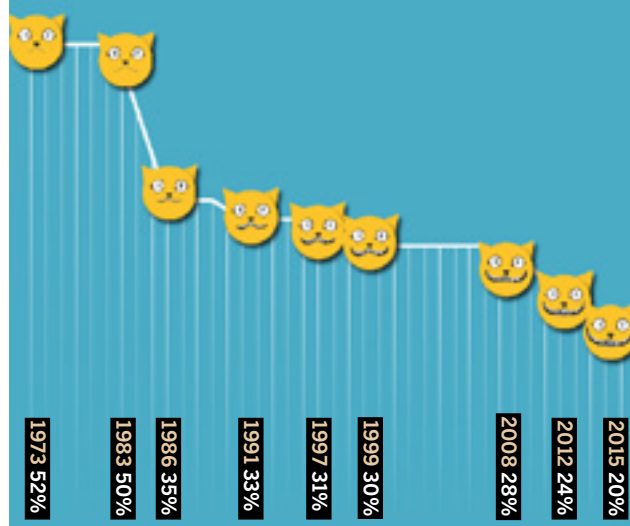
- In households with two or more children, any further children born after April 2017 will not be eligible for child tax credits or universal credit.

- Removing entitlement to Housing Benefit from most 18-21 year olds.
- Amendments to Personal Independence Payment eligibility was also due to take effect on 16 March.

The changes reverse two recent tribunal judgments, and will hit over 150,000 people.

ALRIGHT FOR SOME

We're told there's no money for us, but there's plenty for the Tories' pals. The rate of Corporation Tax for the fat cats has been cut repeatedly over the decades—by Tory, New Labour and coalition governments



Let's raid the fat cats' kitty

SHADOW chancellor John McDonnell said in advance of the budget that the government should use the billions of pounds it is saving for Brexit to save the NHS and social care.

He said, "We believe that the government now have put aside, as is reported, £60 billion—increased tax receipts in January have contributed to this as well—for a crisis in case of Brexit."

"The crisis is here now. We

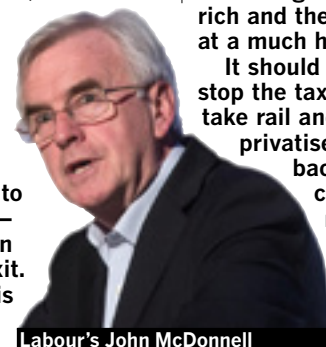
should prepare for Brexit but some of that money now needs to deal with the crisis in the NHS and social care."

McDonnell also put forward a call for a £10 an hour minimum wage.

The whole Labour Party should fight for taxing the rich and the corporations at a much higher rate.

It should also fight to stop the tax evaders, and take rail and all the other privatised industries back from the fat cats who make massive profits from them.

For analysis of the budget see socialistworker.co.uk



Labour's John McDonnell